WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1.   A method of warning of theft of vehicles from a vehicle parking area having an entrance and an exit, the method comprising:

(a)   at the entrance, automatically machine sensing a characteristic of the vehicle as it enters the parking area;

(b)   machine dispensing a ticket to the driver of a vehicle at the entrance;

(c)   machine recording data representing the obtained characteristic in association with data representing an identification of the dispensed ticket;

(d)   at the exit, machine reading the ticket and retrieving the data representing the vehicle characteristic associated with the ticket;

(e)   automatically machine sensing the characteristic of the vehicle at the exit;

(f)   automatically, in a computer system, comparing the characteristic sensed in (e) at the exit with the characteristic obtained in (d) derived from reading the ticket; and

(g)   in the event of a mismatch, generating a warning signal.

2.   A method as in claim 1 and, at the entrance, informing the driver to retain the ticket with him while the vehicle is parked in the parking area.

3. A method as in claim 1 wherein the ticket has a printed number thereon and machine reading the printed number and entering the machine read number into computer memory before the ticket is dispensed.

4. A method as in claim 1 and machine recording the obtained characteristic in (c) by printing the ticket with the sensed characteristic before the ticket is dispensed to the driver.

5. A method as in claim 4 and in step (d) machine reading the ticket to obtain the data representing the characteristic printed on the ticket.

6. A method as in claim 1 and numbering the ticket before it is dispensed and machine recording the obtained characteristic in (c) by entering the characteristic into computer system memory of a computer system.

7. A method as in claim 6 wherein numbering the ticket is by entering a time so that a time is at least part of the ticket number.

8.   A method as in claim 1 and machine reading the ticket to obtain a ticket identifying number printed thereon and retrieving data representing the characteristic of the vehicle sensed at the entrance from computer system memory based on the read ticket identification number.

9.   A method as in claim 1 and printing a number on the ticket before it is dispensed and entering the printed number and the vehicle sensed characteristic into computer system memory in association with each other.

10.   A method of warning that vehicles are being stolen from parking areas, comprising:

(a)   machine reading a license plate number of a vehicle at an entry area of the parking area using an electro-optical license plate reader;

(b)   associating data representing the vehicle license plate number with a ticket;

(c)   dispensing the ticket, at the entry area, to the vehicle's occupant;

(d)   machine sensing the same license plate number of the vehicle at an exit area of the parking area using an electro-optical license plate reader;

(e)   reading the ticket at the exit area;

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(f) attempting, in a computer system, to match the vehicle license plate number sensed at the exit area with the data representing the characteristic associated with the ticket; and

(g) in the event of a mismatch, generating a warning signal.

11. A method as in claim 12 wherein the entry area has an entry barrier gate and dispensing the ticket activates lifting of the entry barrier gate.

12. A method as in claim 10 wherein reading a characteristic, at the entry area and exit area in steps (a) and (d) is performed by a license plate reader which reads at least three alphanumerics of the vehicle's license plate.

13. A system for warning of theft of a vehicle from a vehicle parking area having an entrance and an exit, the system comprising:

(a) first machine sensing means, at the entrance, to automatically obtain a characteristic of the vehicle;

(b) machine dispensing means, at the entrance, to automatically dispense a ticket to a driver of the vehicle;

(c) computer recording means to record data representing the obtained characteristic in association with the ticket;

(d) at the exit, machine means to read the ticket and to derive the vehicle characteristic associated with the ticket from the computer recording means;

(e) second machine sensing means, at the exit, to automatically obtain the characteristic of the vehicle;

(f) computer means to automatically compare the characteristic obtained in (e) as the exit with the data representing the characteristic obtained in (d) derived from reading the ticket; and

(g) signal means to generate a warning signal in the event of a mismatch.

14. A system as in claim 13 and, at the entrance, means to inform the driver to retain the ticket with him while the vehicle is parked in the parking area.

15. A system as in claim 13 wherein the system includes a computer system having computer memory, the ticket has a pre-printed number thereon and machine reading means, at the entry, to read the pre-printed number and to enter the read number into the computer memory.

16. A system as in claim 13 and printing means to record the obtained characteristic by printing the ticket with the characteristic before it is dispensed to the driver.

17. A system as in claim 13 wherein the ticket is numbered before being dispensed and the system includes a computer system having computer memory and means to record the obtained characteristic by entering the characteristic into the computer memory.